

## **IFS QUALITY STANDARDS**

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (*IFS*) prides itself on the high quality of its quantitative and qualitative research - our *raison d'être* has always been to produce research of the highest standard.

### ***Our Framework***

Our systems and practices are designed to ensure that every stage of the research process is carried out to a very high standard. They are also constantly reviewed, reflecting changes in the research climate, in methods and technology, and in the needs of our funders. We insist on the importance of quality in surveys and qualitative research and this determines our approach to quality management and quality assurance and the steps we take at every stage of the research process to define and achieve the highest standards.

Our systems are designed to achieve both *process quality* ie how the research is carried out and *output quality* ie the quality of the data, documentation, analysis and reporting.

### ***Quality Assurance***

Our primary means for ensuring quality is to recruit, train and retain high quality people and to ensure that they have the means to carry out work to the standards we expect. *IFS* employs rigorous selection and training procedures. All our researcher staff have appropriate academic qualifications and new recruits are trained in research methods and project management and are supervised by more experienced researchers.

*IFS* is constantly innovating and learning and, as we improve our procedures, we try to implement these improvements so as to raise our standards and make them more transparent to our sponsors and customers. More generally the organisation has a culture whereby researchers are constantly encouraged to enhance and develop their skills, a process that is monitored through a programme of annual appraisal that sets skill development targets for the following year.

After careful consideration *IFS* has decided not to seek accreditation through any of the general Quality Assurance schemes such as BS7911 or ISO9001. Our considered judgement is that these schemes are too general to have much relevance to the very specialised work that we carry out.

We are happy to explain and discuss any of our procedures with a potential funder upon request.

### ***Our Quality Promise***

We make a number of standard promises that apply to all our research. Other promises relating to project-specific procedures would be documented in a particular project proposals. These promises represent *minimum* standards and procedures. We would expect to exceed or extend these in many cases.

### ***Liaison with Customers and Sponsors***

- We agree appropriate deadlines for all outputs.
- We notify funders of any likely delays in good time and will negotiate revised deadlines.
- We keep funders informed of all pertinent aspects of progress of the research.
- We attempt to keep the same research team for the duration of the project. However, where it is necessary to change the composition, we ensure that new researchers are selected with a view as to how their experience fits with the existing research team. In these circumstances we also ensure a comprehensive briefing and hand-over period between researchers
- We identify a named person (usually the principal project researcher) as the funder's contact point on each project and at least one deputy or named alternative contact in the case of unavailability of that person.
- At all times (office hours only), at least one of those named persons will be available within an agreed time

### ***Ethical Standards***

*IFS* adheres to the Economic and Social Research Council's Ethical Framework, and the Social Research Association's Ethical Guidelines (see <http://www.the-sra.org.uk/documents/pdfs/ethics03.pdf>) and complies fully with the ethical requirements of its funders in all cases. We are fully conscious of our responsibilities to our staff and to the wider scientific community as well as to the public at large.

### ***Good Practice in Academic Research***

As an academic research centre, the Institute for Fiscal Studies has a responsibility to nurture and encourage the highest possible standards of intellectual honesty and integrity. Full details of the Institute's policy *Good practice and misconduct in academic research: a policy document* is available on request.